13: Hodge & Taylor N, E-5 (1930-1956) 1957
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respectively to the head of a coulibri (a local hummingbird) and to topitambours (*Calathea allouia*); to l'envers blanc which has white tubers about two feet long. The tubers of l'envers rouge are redskinned and thick but not more than nine or ten inches long while those of l'envers caraïbe are up to three feet long but thin with the peculiarity of sometimes coiling upon themselves at the end. The leaves of all these varieties, although similar in form, vary considerably in size (3-10 inches long, 1.5-5 inches broad), and in the presence or absence of red coloring on the petioles, sheaths, and bases.

L'envers blanc and l'envers rouge are the only varieties cultivated for the alimentary value of their starch, and of these the former is more common. Arrowroot starch is preferred locally instead of milk (supposed to give worms!) as a food for young children, and even breast-fed infants are given arrowroot as a supplementary food from their second or third day of life.

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The pounded tuber of any of the varieties, mixed with the black wax of the native stingless bee (*Melipona*), is applied to sores and infected wounds. This poultice was formerly used on wounds inflicted by poisoned arrows hence the plant's English name, arrowroot.

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Although all varieties of l'envers are supposedly « good » for various accidents and circumstances of man's life (in the magical sense) the one known as l'envers caraïbe or l'envers tête chien [20] is considered especially efficacious as a powerful Carib charm, and is mentioned in several of the Indians' legends. This plant is said to have been « given » to the old time Caribs by the « Maitre Tête Chien » (a mythical, anthropomorphic chief of all tête chien snakes), who taught the Caribs how to use it. The crushed tuber rubbed on the body when bathing or a little of the starch (obtained by washing the grated tuber and allowing it to settle) held in the mouth is said to confer on the user power over other people.

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Magical rites are connected both with its planting and with the digging of the plant, but as a charm it must not be observed,

[20] The variety takes its name from the local tête chien or boa (*Constrictor orophias*) because the tuber of the plant grows straight down into the ground for two or three feet and then often coils on itself in a manner reminiscent of the snake.